

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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FOR AMBASSADOR MARSHALL GREEN, COORDINATOR, POPULATION
AFFAIRS, FROM NELSON

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SUBJ: OVERVIEW OF AVS CONFERENCE, TUNIS, FEB 1-4

REF: STATE 16503

FOLLOWING IS REPORT FROM MARY M. HASELTON, SPECIAL
ASSISTANT TO COORDINATOR OF POPULATION AFFAIRS, STATE
DEPT, RE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ASSOCIATION
FOR VOLUNTARY STERILIZATION, TUNIS:

1. LEADERS IN FAMILY PLANNING, 280 PHYSICIANS AND NON-
PHYSICIANS, ATTENDED THIRD INTERNATIONAL AVS CONFERENCE.
CONFERENCE, HELD AT TUNIS HILTON, WAS CO-HOSTED BY TUNISIAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH IN COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL
FEDERATION OF GYNECOLOGY AND OBSTETRICS AND THE INTER-
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NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FERTILITY SOCIETIES.

2. TUNISIA HAS A GOVERNMENT PROGRAM ON FAMILY PLANNING WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND HAS NO LEGAL BARRIERS TO ANY METHOD OF FERTILITY CONTROL, INCLUDING ABORTION. OFFICIAL WELCOME GIVEN BY MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE ON BEHALF MINISTER OF HEALTH STRESSED A DIVERSIFIED APPROACH TO FAMILY PLANNING GENERALLY IN THE CONTEXT OF A TOTAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC BASE, INCLUDING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THE PROTECTION OF THE HEALTH OF THE MOTHER, THE CHILD, AND THE FAMILY, WITH FULL EMPHASIS ON EQUAL STATUS OF WOMEN, LEGALLY PRESENT IN TUNIS SINCE 1956.

3. CONFEREES EXPRESSED A RANGE OF EXPECTATIONS FOR FUTURE ROLE OF STERILIZATION AS THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEANS OF CONTRACEPTION WHEN DESIRED FAMILY SIZE IS REACHED. MAJORITY VIEW APPEARED TO CENTER ON FOLLOWING THEMES AND CRITERIA:

(A) STERILIZATION AS YET IS AN IRREVERSIBLE PROCESS AND MUST BE FULLY UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED AS SUCH.

(B) AS WITH OTHER FORMS OF CONTRACEPTION, INDIVIDUALS SHOULD BE PROVIDED FULL INFORMATION AND ACCESS TO STERILIZATION PROCEDURES, SO THAT FREE CHOICE IS EXERCISED IN THE CONTROL OF PERSONAL FERTILITY.

(C) STERILIZATION PROCEDURES MUST BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF SOUND MEDICAL CARE AND PRACTICE AT ALL TIMES AND IN ALL PLACES, REQUIRING THE HIGHEST MEDICAL STANDARDS AND MOST COMPLETE AND COMPETENT SERVICES AVAILABLE BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER SURGERY.

(D) EXTREME CARE SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE MOTIVATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION OF ACCEPTORS WITH LONG LEAD-TIME PRIOR TO PERFORMANCE OF SURGERY. ACCEPTORS MUST FULLY UNDERSTAND THAT VOLUNTARY STERILIZATION IS A FINAL STEP IN A SERIES OF CONTRACEPTIVE MEASURES AVAILABLE.

(E) THERE IS AN URGENT NEED TO MAKE SIMPLIFIED BUT QUALITATIVE SERVICES AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS, EXTENDING SUCH SERVICES THROUGH COMPETENT TRAINING BY UNCLASSIFIED

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PHYSICIANS OF MIDWIVES, NURSES, AND PARAMEDICS, AS APPROPRIATE TO LOCAL SETTINGS AND ALWAYS WITH ADEQUATE PHYSICIAN SUPERVISION AVAILABLE ON CALL.

(F) THERE SHOULD BE ADEQUATE COMPENSATION TO PHYSICIANS, TECHNICAL, AND EDUCATIONAL STAFF, OTHERWISE THEY WILL NOT BE FULLY MOTIVATED TO PARTICIPATE IN DELIVERY OF INTEGRATED FAMILY PLANNING AND HEALTH SYSTEMS.

(G) INCENTIVES AND DISENCENTIVES TO ACCEPTORS DESIRABLE
AS LONG AS THEY REMAIN A PART OF VOLUNTARISM.

(H) EFFORTS TO REMOVE LEGAL, SOCIO-CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS,
AND POLITICAL BARRIERS MUST CONTINUE.

4. CONFERENCE MAINTAINED MOOD OF CONFIDENCE AND PRAGMATIC
OPTIMISM. PRIMARY CRITICISM HEARD IN CORRIDORS WAS COMPLETE
LACK OF SCHEDULED TIME IN PLENARY FOR DISCUSSION. MONOGRAPH
OF SOME 5 PLENARY PRESENTATIONS AND SUMMARY OF 21 WORKSHOPS
WILL BE AVAILABLE.

5. DR. NAFIS SADIK OF UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR POPULATION
ACTIVITIES WAS PRESENTED HUGH MOORE AWARD FOR HER OUTSTANDING
WORK DURING WORD POPULATION YEAR AND INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S
YEAR.

6. COMMENT: PRIMARY ACHIEVEMENT MAY BE REINFORCEMENT OF
RESPECTABILITY OF SUBJECT IN MINDS OF PARTICIPANTS AS THEY
RETURN TO HOME COUNTRIES AND CONFRONT DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH
COMPONENTS OF DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS.

7. DEPT MAY WISH TO DISTRIBUTE REPORT TO OTHER APPROPRIATE
POSTS.
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